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Im Fokus

The Reluctant Peacekeeper: Japan's Ambivalent Stance on UN Peace Operations

Zögerlicher Friedensstifter: Japans ambivalente Haltung zu den Friedensmissionen der Vereinten Nationen

Frank A. Stengel

Abstract

The question of overseas deployment of the Self Defence Force (SDF) continues to be one of the most controversial issues in Japan's foreign policy. This becomes particularly obvious with respect to participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Japan is caught between, on the one hand, the aspiration to contribute to international peace and security and, on the other, the need to adhere to the constitution, which renounces the use of force as an instrument of foreign policy. This has led to strict legal limitations concerning Japan's participation in peacekeeping missions, resulting in significant practical problems in the field. Despite revisions of the legal framework, Japan's contribution to peacekeeping activities remains severely limited, particularly with respect to so-called robust peacekeeping. Instead of gradually broadening the SDF's activities, however, Tokyo would be better advised to strengthen its civilian contribution to peace operations.¹

Keywords: Japan, UN peacekeeping, use of force, Article 9

Introduction

The question of overseas deployment of the Self-Defence Force (SDF) continues to be one of the most controversial and highly debated topics in Japan's foreign policy. The most recent chapter in this ongoing story has been the discussion surrounding the extension of the controversial Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSMML), which allows for the SDF's refuelling mission in the Indian Ocean. On 11 January 2008, after four months of political quarrel between the ruling

¹ The author would like to thank Nadine Burgschweiger, Melissa Nelson and Ryoma Sakaeda for helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.

coalition and the opposition, the lower house of the Japanese Diet passed the new law. Japanese ships had had to be withdrawn after the law expired in November 2007, due to resistance in the opposition-led upper house. The withdrawal had led to pressure on the Japanese government, most notably from the United States (US). To achieve an extension, the lower house, led by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, had to overrule the upper house with a two-thirds majority – a very rare manoeuvre in Japanese politics (AS, 12/1/08). The opposition, first and foremost the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Ichirō Ozawa, opposes the refuelling mission because that would mean “providing supplies to United States military operations” and is “against the spirit of the Constitution” (Democratic Party of Japan 2007). Instead, Japan should limit its contributions to United Nations (UN) peace operations. This exemplifies the more general dilemma Tokyo is trapped in. On the one hand, the Japanese government is eager to make a contribution to international peace and security, in order to, in the words of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, “become a country which is relied upon internationally” (Fukuda 2007).² On the other hand, since the end of the Second World War, the topic of SDF dispatch has been a particularly sensitive issue for Japan. Crucial here is Japan’s particular stance on the use of force in international relations. The central legal norm is the well-known Article 9 of the Japanese constitution, which states that “the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes” and prohibits the maintenance of land, sea, and air forces (Japanese Government 1947). It has come to be the dominant interpretation that Article 9 excludes the SDF’s use of force abroad as well as Japanese participation in collective security activities (George Mulgan 1995: 1104).

This dilemma becomes particularly obvious with respect to Japan’s ambivalent stance on UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs). On the one hand, Japan is the second biggest financier of UN peacekeeping operations after the US. At 17 percent of the overall budget, Japan’s contribution accounts for almost twice the amount of Germany’s (9 percent) (United Nations 2007d). Japan is on the UN Peacebuilding Commission, and Yukio Takaso, a Japanese citizen, was elected chairman in September 2007. On the other hand, in terms of

² This is due in part to Tokyo’s aspiration to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Lukner 2007: 106).

personnel contributions, Japan is still only a “reluctant peacekeeper” (Marten Zisk 2001: 22). As of 31 December 2007, Tokyo ranks eighty-second (Germany: nineteenth),³ with an overall current contribution of 38 personnel (Germany: 1,119) (United Nations 2007b). Currently, Japan has 30 SDF troops deployed in the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights, which is monitoring the ceasefire between Israel and Syria. Six military observers are deployed in the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), and two police officers are part of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) (United Nations 2007c).⁴

This article focuses on Japanese peacekeeping policy, which is caught between the ambition to contribute to international peace and security and the need to adhere to Japan’s constitutional requirements. I will focus here only on those activities conducted on the basis of the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law (PKO law). Missions conducted under special laws such as the ATSMML are only taken into account insofar as they have provided momentum for changes with respect to the PKO law.⁵ I will argue that despite significant changes in the legal basis, the possibilities for Japanese participation in UN PKOs remain severely limited. Particularly with respect to robust peacekeeping, the provisions of Japan’s peace constitution, public opinion, the possible reactions of Japan’s neighbours, and bureaucratic factors prevent a commitment of troops. Japan has two options for how to proceed from here. First, it can continue to gradually weaken the constraints on the use of force with the aim of ultimately participating in the full range of UN PKOs. Alternatively, it can focus on the civilian aspects of conflict prevention and peacekeeping. Judging from the still severe constraints on the use of force, which are here to stay, as well as from the requirements of contemporary peace missions, the latter seems to be the right path for Japanese peace policy.

³ In October 2003, Japan still ranked twenty-sixth (Ishizuka 2005: 67).

⁴ To put this into perspective: As of 31 December 2007, 84,309 military and civilian police personnel were deployed overall in UN peacekeeping operations (United Nations 2007a).

⁵ These are basically two distinct types of operations, based on different rationales. The missions in Iraq and Afghanistan are first and foremost US-led missions, and Japanese participation is primarily motivated by alliance requirements rather than UN-centrist foreign policy (Lukner 2007: 107-108). As Christopher Hughes points out, the Iraqi Reconstruction Law, allowing for SDF dispatch to Iraq, was mainly motivated by considerations of alliance management (Hughes 2007: 332).

The Development of UN Peacekeeping

During recent decades, UN peacekeeping has undergone significant changes (Kühne 2003: 716). Beginning with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), set up in the Middle East in 1948, the so-called traditional or first-generation type of peacekeeping mission was developed, mainly to monitor ceasefires.⁶ After a ceasefire had been reached between the conflict parties (mostly states), a mainly military peacekeeping force was dispatched to serve as a buffer between the conflict parties. The central principles of these missions were the consent of the conflict parties, strict impartiality, and the use of force only for self-defence (Kühne 2003: 716). Examples of such missions are the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and UNDOF on the Golan Heights. However, these missions merely “froze” the conflicts; they did not actively contribute to their resolution. In contrast, the second generation of peacekeeping, which arose during the late 1980s, was characterised by a dynamic, multidimensional approach aiming for political, social, and economic conflict resolution. In these missions, police and civilian personnel were deployed alongside military peacekeepers, and the monitoring of ceasefire agreements was only one among many tasks, such as conducting elections, providing humanitarian aid, disarmament, the repatriation of refugees, etc. (Kühne 2003: 717, 2005: 27). Although some of these missions (for instance, in Namibia) brought quick results, in an increasing number of conflicts, the signing of a ceasefire agreement did not put an end to violence. Interstate wars, involving a variety of state and non-state actors with a complex mixture of economic, political, identity-based, and religious motives (cf. Kaldor 1999; Münkler 2002; van Creveld 1991), proved particularly difficult to end. Factors such as state failure, war economies, and protracted refugee situations contributed to a recurrence of violence and the tendency towards cross-border escalation (cf. Berdal/Malone 2000; Jean/Rufin 1996; Loescher/Milner 2005; Zartman 1995). Faced with the painful peacekeep-

⁶ However, one has to keep in mind that the strict historical classification of peacekeeping into different generations is misleading insofar as some of the PKOs during the Cold War encountered problems generally associated with new (post-Cold War) or third-generation peacekeeping. For instance, the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in the period 1960–1964 “confronted warlords and mercenaries who were outside the command and control of states; the conflict itself was ongoing and ceasefires were impermanent; and the peacekeepers themselves were given several different mandates, which included peace enforcement” (Bellamy 2004: 21).

ing experiences of Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995, the guiding principles of traditional peacekeeping were increasingly questioned, and emphasis shifted towards the ability of a peacekeeping force to protect not only itself but also civilian personnel and the local population, in accordance with the evolving human-security paradigm (Rittberger 2007: 12). This was the birth of so-called “robust” or third-generation peacekeeping. These missions were undertaken under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, endowed with a mandate by the UN Security Council to use force against (often armed) factions working to undermine the peace process (so-called “spoilers”). Thus, the Brahimi Report emphasised the necessity of dispatching peacekeeping forces with sufficient manpower and which were adequately equipped to provide a “credible deterrent threat” (United Nations 2000: 9). Although the principles of consent and impartiality remain cornerstones of robust forms of peacekeeping (reflecting the insight that peace cannot be successfully enforced from the outside), they are no longer accepted as a reason to ignore massive human rights abuse or genocide (Kühne 2003: 721). As the Brahimi Report pointed out, “In some cases, local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so” (United Nations 2000: 9). Consequently, not only do these missions explicitly include the use of force in their mandate (if, however, only as a last resort), but also the underlying understanding of impartiality has changed.

The Japanese Peacekeeping Law and the Changing Realities of UN Peacekeeping Operations

The Road to the PKO Law

The starting point for Japanese participation in peacekeeping operations was the Second Gulf War in 1990, which was an important catalyst for Japan’s changing attitude towards troop dispatch. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, Japan supported sanctions against Baghdad and provided financial assistance to the countries affected. In the run-up to the US-led operation to force Iraq out of Kuwait, US president George H. W. Bush requested that Japan send minesweepers and provide logistical support. The Japanese government itself was in favour of providing logistical backing. In October 1990, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) introduced the United Nations Peace Cooperation Bill (UNPCB) to the Diet. The draft law was intended to allow for the deployment of the

SDF to conduct tasks such as overseeing ceasefire agreements and monitoring elections as well as medical and logistical support. However, due to domestic resistance from the public, from opposition parties, and even from within the LDP, the government had to withdraw the bill. The main reason for the resistance was the fear that SDF personnel might get involved in the use of force, as the draft law would have also allowed for SDF members dispatched under the UNPCB to carry small firearms to defend themselves. Ultimately, no troops were dispatched. Although Tokyo made a huge financial contribution to the war against Iraq,⁷ the Japanese government faced fierce criticism from the US and European governments for not having deployed the SDF. Moreover, Japan was excluded from a Kuwaiti advertisement in the *New York Times*, thanking those nations that had contributed to the fight against Iraq (Heinrich et al. 1999: 19; Ishizuka 2004: 138-139; Maswood 1992: 151-152; Purrington 1992: 165-167; Rose 2000: 126-127). In reaction to this international criticism, Tokyo ultimately deployed six minesweepers to the region. This was justified domestically as being necessary for the maintenance of safe shipping lanes (Gilson 2007: 32; Rose 2000: 126-127).

With Tokyo being confronted with the accusation of “chequebook diplomacy”, the Gulf war triggered a domestic debate surrounding the international contribution of Japan. The debate centred on the question of Japan’s “human contribution” to international peace and security. One crucial aspect was the possibility of dispatching SDF personnel abroad without giving up Japan’s traditional “pacifist” position (Ito 2007: 77). During the following months, the LDP worked to achieve broad agreement on a second bill, and a consensus emerged between the ruling party and the leading opposition parties, such as the Kōmeitō and the Democratic Socialist Party, that Japan should seek a more active role in maintaining international peace and security. In particular, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was anxious not to give up the law. MOFA had been supporting the dispatch of SDF personnel for decades (Marten Zisk 2001: 25), and it aspired to a prominent role for Japan in the peacekeeping operation in Cambodia that was about to commence (Heinrich et al. 1999: 19-20). In the course of the US-led intervention in the Gulf region, Japanese public opinion on the issue shifted due to the international criticism of Japan’s “free-riding”

⁷ Overall, Tokyo provided 13 billion USD, which covered almost one-third of the coalition’s military operation (Ito 2007: 77; Maswood 1992: 151).

in international security as well as the success of the minesweeping mission. At the beginning of the Gulf crisis, a majority of the public had opposed the idea of dispatching the SDF, but a year later, at the end of 1991, almost 60 percent supported overseas deployment (Maswood 1992: 153; Rose 2000: 127). Furthermore, in June 1991, the LDP had created a special study group focusing on Japan's international role. The so-called Ozawa Commission, named after its chair, then LDP general secretary Ichirō Ozawa, presented its findings in November 1991 and strongly recommended Japan's participation in UN peacekeeping operations (Ishizuka 2005: 68-69).⁸

The Legal Provisions of PKO Law and the Requirements of UN Peacekeeping

In September 1991, the International Peace Cooperation Bill was presented to the Diet, and in June 1992 – after a controversial parliamentary debate – the International Peace Cooperation Law (PKO law) was passed. To ensure the support of the leading opposition parties, however, the LDP had to make a number of concessions, mostly focusing on the non-use of force. Thus, the law included the so-called “Five Principles” for Japanese participation in PKOs, which determined that

- 1) a ceasefire must have been reached between the conflict parties prior to a deployment;
- 2) the conflict parties have to give their consent to (a) the deployment of the peacekeeping force and (b) Japanese participation in that force;
- 3) the peacekeeping force has to be strictly impartial;
- 4) the Japanese government may withdraw its contingent if one of the criteria should not be satisfied anymore; and
- 5) the use of weapons be limited to the self-defence of Japanese soldiers (Ishizuka 2004: 140-141).

Adherence to the five principles is ensured by the Diet, which decides on SDF dispatch as well as on the extension of missions beyond the timeframe of two years (Ito 2007: 88). In addition to the five principles, the ruling coalition made

⁸ Interestingly, the commission even argued, drawing on the constitution's preamble, that the dispatch of troops under Articles 42 and 43 of the UN Charter would be constitutional (Ishizuka 2005: 69). The two articles are part of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which presents the coercive measures the UN Security Council can take to restore international peace and security.

another concession, to the Kōmeitō party in particular. Following the agreement, a “freeze” was put on certain activities until a further law was passed. These activities included almost every risky task a peacekeeping force could undertake, such as monitoring ceasefires, troop demobilisation, patrolling, transportation or storage of weapons, etc. In practice that meant that the SDF was only permitted to conduct rear-support missions such as medical assistance or signals communication (Marten Zisk 2001: 29).

Since the passage of the PKO law, Japanese personnel has participated in a number of peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations as well as election monitoring activities based on the PKO law, for instance, in Cambodia, Angola, the Golan Heights, and East Timor. However, the five principles, which were intended to ensure the compatibility of the mission with the Japanese constitution, have posed a number of problems for the practice of peacekeeping missions. As early as its first mission abroad, the SDF encountered problems in its cooperation with other countries’ forces due to the limits set by the five principles. Immediately after the passage of the PKO law, eight military observers, 75 civilian police officers, 600 SDF engineers, and 41 civilian electoral observers were dispatched to Cambodia to participate in the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), the first test of the PKO law (Dobson 2003: 95; MOFA 2005). Although the overall mission took place without major problems, SDF soldiers were asked to fulfil duties that were not originally agreed upon in the implementation plan. Anxious not to overstep their mandate, SDF commanders requested government approval every time they were asked to undertake tasks that were only slightly different from the tasks specified in the implementation plan. The government itself was worried about violating the PKO law and was slow to respond, which resulted in the SDF only seldom assuming duties beyond those explicitly specified (Heinrich et al. 1999: 24-25). These rigid limitations complicated cooperation with other troop contingents and led to frustration among UN personnel and the Cambodian host population (Ito 2007: 81). Furthermore, during that operation, the five principles were not consistently applied. As it became apparent that the political arm of the Khmer Rouge would most likely lose the elections UNTAC was able to carry out, they repeatedly violated the ceasefire (Rabehl s.a.). This even resulted in attacks on UN installations where Japanese personnel were regularly resident. Moreover, SDF members were nearly involved in a number of skirmishes in Takeo Province (Heinrich et al. 1999: 25). In the run-up to the elections, a Japanese UN volunteer and

a civilian policeman were killed, resulting in criticism from opposition parties (Ishizuka 2004: 146). According to the fourth principle, the ceasefire breach would have allowed the Japanese government to withdraw the SDF contingent, as the breach of the ceasefire violated the first principle. However, then chief cabinet secretary Yōhei Kōno argued that the ceasefire was still in place and that the mission was not compromised.⁹ Even when faced with a full-scale offensive of the Phnom Penh government against the Khmer Rouge in February 1993, the Japanese government stuck to this interpretation and even followed a request by UNTAC to expand the SDF's area of operations (Dobson 2003: 100). To avoid international criticism, the Japanese government did not withdraw its contingent but instead assigned the SDF a clearer security role. Lightly armed SDF members were thus permitted to patrol polling stations; this was officially labelled "information gathering" to avoid violation of the PKO law (Ishizuka 2005: 77).

Likewise, the strict limitations imposed by the PKO law have clashed with the mission rules of UN PKOs in other missions. Most notably, the fifth principle concerning the use of force stands in contrast to the UN interpretation of self-defence. According to the UN, self-defence includes the defence of the mission as a whole (Marten Zisk 2001: 28). According to the 1992 version of the PKO law, however, SDF members were only permitted to use force to defend themselves – not to help UN personnel from other countries or to protect the local population. Furthermore, the use of force could not be ordered by SDF officers, but depended solely on the individual's judgment. Thus, the Japanese government could argue that SDF members would not engage in collective self-defence and consequently, that this particular form of self-defence was constitutional (Ito 2007: 87). This led to significant problems. In the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), for instance, SDF members had to decline a request to help look for missing UN staff; in UNTAC, the Japanese civilian police force was the only contingent not able to participate in the arrest of individuals violating the election process (Ishizuka 2005: 77). Similar problems have arisen in a number of other missions (cf. e.g. Marten Zisk 2001: 28), and the strict principles of the PKO law have led to conflicts with the standard operating procedures and even the

⁹ In fact, a group of police officers was withdrawn to Thailand without UN permission and only sent back after UN protests that the command authority had been violated (Marten Zisk 2001: 28).

basic spirit of UN PKOs.

In 1996, as a result of these practical experiences, the director general of the International Peace Cooperation Headquarters (the government body within the cabinet office in charge of peace operations) recommended a revision of the PKO law (Heinrich et al. 1999: 29-30). In 1998, the law was changed for the first time. Taking into account the increasing regionalisation of peace operations (cf. Bellamy/Williams 2005),¹⁰ the SDF was now permitted to participate in election-monitoring activities organised not only by the UN but also by regional organisations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Furthermore, the ceasefire requirement (first principle) was dropped for humanitarian missions involving the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Moreover, the law modified the rules for the use of force. While SDF members were still permitted to use force only to defend themselves, this no longer depended on the individual's judgment but could be ordered by the commanding field officers (Ishizuka 2004: 142). However, these were rather moderate changes, which did not result in any significant improvement concerning the practical problems of SDF personnel dispatched in UN missions.

After 9/11: The "Global War on Terrorism" and Japanese Participation in Peacekeeping Missions

An important step forward with respect to international crisis management was taken after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Faced with US expectations that Japan would make a human contribution, Prime Minister Jun'ichirō Koizumi was determined to dispatch the SDF to support the United States' "global war on terrorism" (GWOT). In October 2001, the Diet passed the ATSMML, allowing for the deployment of SDF ships on a refuelling mission to the Indian Ocean. The law, though primarily intended to fight terrorism, was relevant for Japan's peacekeeping role insofar as it transcended the provisions of the PKO law and thus opened up a window for its revision. Firstly, under the PKO law, troops were only deployed to areas where conflict had ended and they

¹⁰ The number of peace operations conducted by regional organisations has increased significantly: "In the twelve months to 30 September 2006, the number of troops deployed by NATO, the African Union and the European Union rose by 28 percent from 52,700 to 68,000" (Center on International Cooperation 2007: 1).

were to be strictly impartial. These two conditions were not met in the ATSMML (Ishizuka 2004: 143). Moreover, the ATSMML extended the understanding of self-defence. The PKO law (even in its revised form) allowed for the use of force only to protect SDF members. In contrast, SDF personnel deployed under the ATSMML were permitted to use force to defend not only themselves, “but also *those accompanying them or those who have come under their control in the course of conducting duties*” (Midford 2003: 332, italics added).¹¹ The debates surrounding Japan’s contribution to the GWOT also revived the discussion about UN peace operations. The discussion had been ongoing since the 1992 enactment of the PKO law, and the Japanese public increasingly favoured a more active role of the SDF in international crisis management, particularly in countering terrorism (Ishizuka 2006: 7). In the aftermath of 9/11 and the passage of the ATSMML, 44 percent of respondents to a poll were in favour of SDF participation in the full range of UN peacekeeping activities (Dobson 2003: 140). In December 2001, an amendment to the PKO law was passed in the Diet, supported by the three ruling parties and a majority of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The bill brought a number of significant changes. Firstly, it lifted the “freeze” on peacekeeping activities such as monitoring ceasefires, patrolling demilitarised zones, transporting weapons, etc. Secondly, it changed the rules for the use of force. Like the ATSMML, the revised PKO law permitted deployed SDF personnel to use force to protect people “under their control” (Ishizuka 2005: 75) – for instance, members of other countries’ armed forces, refugees, UN and other international organisations’ personnel and government officials – as well as weapons stores (Ishizuka 2006: 8). The law made the legal framework compatible with the Brahimi Report (Ishizuka 2005: 75), which had also played a role in changing the Japanese position (Dobson 2003: 152).

Based on the revised PKO law, Japan sent 690 SDF personnel to East Timor in March 2002 – the country’s largest contribution to a UN PKO (Ishizuka 2006: 7). Despite the revision of the law, SDF activities in the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and its successor, the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (INMISSET), did not differ significantly from previous missions. The main tasks fulfilled by the SDF were road maintenance, the concreting of Dili airport, and bridge repairs. Despite gaining the respect

¹¹ However, during the debate almost no concerns were raised with respect to the constitutional validity of the ATSMML (Ishizuka 2004: 144).

of the local populace for their professionalism, the SDF encountered problems similar to those of previous missions such as UNTAC. During the operation, an SDF engineer battalion was deployed close to the border of West Timor, that is, in an insecure environment. Despite this fact, the soldiers were “mostly unarmed and unprepared for combat” (Ishizuka 2005: 78), relying for their safety on other troop contingents from New Zealand, Portugal, and South Korea. Another recent example is the Japanese stance on the Darfur crisis. In 2005, Tokyo had already turned down UN requests to participate in the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) due to the high risk of the mission (Ishizuka 2006: 15-16). In December 2007, the Japanese government declined requests by the Burundi government to provide airlift support for its soldiers taking part in the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Although the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed in early 2006 between the Sudanese government and the biggest rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army, the UN and other parties are still working to bring other conflict parties into the peace process (Kyodo, 17/12/07, in: BBC-Email, 18/12/07). Thus, no ceasefire between all the conflict parties has been implemented, and Tokyo had to decline the Burundi request as well as a similar one by the Tanzanian government (Kyodo, 10/1/08, in: BBC-Email, 11/01/08). The Japanese refusal is particularly unfortunate as Darfur will be one of the central topics of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in May and the G8 summit in July this year, both of which will take place in Japan (Kyodo, 17/12/07, in: BBC-Email, 18/12/07).

Conclusion

Since the passage of the PKO law in 1992, Japanese governments have gradually adapted the legal basis for military peace operations (and the interpretation of the constitution). Particularly since 9/11, Japan has taken significant steps towards loosening legal restrictions on the SDF's overseas missions. Despite these changes, the possibilities for the SDF's participation in UN peacekeeping missions are still limited to traditional peacekeeping missions and peace support operations (Aoi 2007) and Tokyo remains reluctant to commit troops to PKOs. Furthermore, decisions take a great deal of time, thus effectively undermining early action. According to Ito (2007: 88), the strict limitations of the PKO law may even “call into question the effectiveness and propriety of Japanese participation in such operations”.

There are several reasons for Japanese reluctance. The first, and probably best-known, reason is the norm of anti-militarism which is engrained in Japanese society. In the international relations literature, Japan, almost an ideal-type “civilian power” (Maull 1990), is often portrayed as having a “culture of anti-militarism” (Berger 1998). Following this argument, Tokyo has, due to its experience in the Second World War, discounted military force as an instrument of foreign policy. This norm has clashed with an emerging international norm of peacekeeping, which gradually “could transcend all other norms in importance” (Dobson 2003: 93). However, the norm of anti-militarism continues to influence Japanese foreign policy, thus making far-reaching changes more difficult. Therefore, despite the frequent calls of conservative politicians for increased Japanese commitment to UN PKOs,¹² it seems doubtful that a Japanese public would accept SDF participation in robust peacekeeping. A second, and closely related, factor is the neighbouring countries’ fear of a renewed Japanese militarism (Nabers 2007: 41), which Tokyo is keen to prevent (Dobson 2003: 38). Most Asian nations regard the use of force by Japan as “controversial and provocative” (Aoi 2004: 123), and the concern over potential reactions is an important factor limiting Japan’s security and defence policy. Tokyo has generally proven to be anxious to reassure its neighbours (cf. Midford 2002, 2004). Here, Japan’s constitutionally enshrined “pacifism” provides “perhaps the only visible symbol of Japan’s commitment to breaking with its militarist past” (Aoi 2004: 123) and fulfils an important function in comforting its neighbours. Thus far, other Asian nations have supported Japan’s evolving role in PKOs. However, a participation in robust peacekeeping would require a revision of Article 9 of the constitution, and it is far from clear if Japan’s neighbours would welcome such a move. Furthermore, Japanese participation in PKOs is limited by disunity among the different government agencies. MOFA strongly endorses Japanese participation, as peacekeeping is seen as a fairly uncontroversial way to contribute to international peace and security. This, in turn, would strengthen the Japanese plea for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Heinrich et al. 1999: 35). In contrast, the Japan Defence Agency (now the Ministry of

¹² For instance, Ozawa has been calling for a revision of Article 9 of the constitution to allow for SDF participation in UN peacekeeping missions involving the use of force (Heinrich et al. 1999: 31). In 2001, Yasuo Fukuda lamented that Japan’s scale of troop dispatch was smaller than other countries (JT, 8/12/01).

Defence [MoD]) has been reluctant to commit personnel, especially to robust peacekeeping. According to Kimberley Marten Zisk, this is due to the MoD's recruitment strategy, which portrays peacekeeping operations as an extension of the SDF's domestic role in disaster relief, etc. Consequently, most Japanese do not associate duty in the SDF with danger. The death of Japanese soldiers in robust peacekeeping missions would therefore pose a significant problem for SDF recruitment activities. On the other hand, the strict rules of the PKO law have been bad for the morale of the dispatched soldiers, as they feel embarrassed when they have to decline UN requests (Marten Zisk 2001: 32). Lastly, UN peace enforcement missions have encountered a number of problems; these have further contributed to Japanese scepticism towards participation in robust peacekeeping (Heinrich et al. 1999: 30).

With respect to the future of its peace policy, Japan basically has two options to choose from. First, the government could continue on its current path of gradually relaxing anti-militarist norms. The goal here would be for Japan to eventually participate in the whole range of peacekeeping activities, including robust missions, which in recent years have come to be the dominant form of PKO (Kühne 2005: 28). This would require a constitutional revision, and indeed scholars have called for such a move, as the current constitution allows for ad hoc solutions (cf. Nabers 2006). Since the founding of the SDF in 1954, Japanese governments have continually redefined the constitution to allow for an ever greater international role for the SDF (Mulloy 2007: 7-8). However, due to the many factors constraining Japanese security policy, there still seems to be a long way to go. Moreover, it is far from clear that the gradual expansion of the SDF's international role is the only, or the best, path to choose. Peace researchers have long pointed out that the utility of military troops in peace missions is severely limited. Military quick fixes rarely, if ever, work (Bures 2007: 419). To be sure, the dispatch of armed forces can contribute to a mutual trust among the parties to a ceasefire that the other side will not break it. It can also provide security for civilian personnel and the local population, and assist with the building or rebuilding of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, etc. However, to achieve a sustainable peace (particularly in the aftermath of civil wars, the dominant type of conflicts after the end of the Cold War), civilian efforts are what is primarily needed.

This leads to the second option, that is, increased emphasis on the civilian aspects of peacekeeping and conflict prevention. The German federal government

has particularly emphasised the primacy of civilian conflict prevention. Most notably, Berlin has taken a significant step forward with its Action Plan “Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace-Building” (Federal Government 2004).¹³ This approach reflects the insight that for a lasting peace, it is indispensable to establish mechanisms for peaceful dispute management. A military intervention might help end the fighting or keep it from reoccurring, but it can only do so for a limited amount of time. Moreover, in the long run, a foreign military presence has a high chance of provoking opposition by local actors and can thus turn out to be counterproductive. A sustainable peace necessitates long-term civilian measures, which the military cannot replace (Fischer 2004: 320; Rittberger 2007: 13), and it is far from safe to argue that military measures are more cost-efficient (Brzoska 2007b). Long-term military peacebuilding missions have proven to be much less successful than short-term first-generation missions. These long-term operations require, above all else, civilian efforts (Brzoska 2007a: 38). Concentrating on these aspects of peace operations seems to be the right approach not only for Germany (cf. Weller 2007) or Europe (cf. Eilstrup Sangiovanni 2003) but also, due to its even more troubled relationship with the international use of force, for Japan.

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¹³ However, the government has proven to be reluctant in its efforts to actually implement the action plan (cf. Weller 2007).

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